

**Human Rights Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
December 9, 2009  
7:30 PM in the Newton City Hall cafeteria**

**Attendance:**

Commissioners present: Jane Brown, Peter Brown, Muriel Esdale, Marianne Ferguson (Chair), Brenda Krasnow, Sheila Mondschein, Sona Petrossian, and Susan Thomas

Commissioners absent/regrets: Judy Fischbach

Advisory Council Members present: Lt. Bruce Apotheker, Lillian Backman, Sam Glass, Nazik Kazimi, Viviana Planine, Joan Rubin and Frank Wolpe

Advisory Council Members absent/regrets: Ann Capoccia, Dianne Chilingirian, Homer Franck, Carol Kelley, Norman Lazarus, Carleton Merrill, Myrna Offen, and Suzy Rosenthal

Advisory Students present: Camilla Jackson (NNHS), Lily Konowitz (NSHS) and Stephi Dworkin (NSHS)

Staff present: Beverly Droz

Guests: Ophelia Boachie, Karen Clay, Leona Markiewicz, Dr. Jack Porter, students Sophie Scharlin-Pettee and Rebecca Penzias

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**The meeting opened at 7:37 PM and was chaired by Marianne Ferguson.**

Introductions were made around the room and guests were welcomed. Stephanie Dworkin, a new representative from NSHS, was welcomed and confirmed as a student advisory member.

**School Updates:**

**Newton South High School –**

Lily and Stephanie reported that there is now a student exchange program with India and five students are going to New Delhi from December 10-31. Fifteen students recently came from Russia from November 12-25. Next year, students from the school will go there and the program will alternate students going to each location yearly. The Transgender Day of Remembrance took place on November 20. “National Inclusive Schools” week took place the first week in December and included two presentations on understanding physical and mental disabilities. The South Anti-War Club will present “Perspectives on the War on Terror” with Paul Beran from the Harvard University Center on Middle Eastern Studies on December 11. The program will focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its significance to the greater war. Articles on METCO were presented with pro and con letters about the program and discussions in classrooms followed. The METCO Task Force will hold its first meeting on December 10 to address any misunderstandings.

**Newton North High School –**

Camilla reported that their “National Inclusive Schools” day will take place on Friday, December 11 and is open to the public. Several speakers will present on various issues such as mental illness and physical disabilities. The PAWS Mediation Training, which focuses on peer-to-peer conflict resolution, occurred and eight students were trained. On December 16, To Be Glad Day, an annual awareness day where students take a day of silence in support of the cause, will take place. Throughout the day, the Newton South Gay/Straight Alliance will be presenting a series of programs in order to promote awareness of issues affecting transgender, bisexual, gay and lesbian people.

**Administrative Business**

A motion to approve the November 10, 2009 meeting minutes with the clarification changes made earlier in the day was made by Susan and seconded by Brenda and the motion passed unanimously.

## **Hate Crimes/Incidents**

Lt. Apotheker updated the Commission on hate crimes and incidents.

- A 19 year-old male was charged with a bomb scare from two years ago. The fingerprints were just acquired.
- At a tire and battery store on Needham Street, a man went to pick up his car and the attendant, an African American male, told the man there was a \$3 disposal fee. The man called him names including "nigger" and exhibited aggressive behavior toward the attendant. He was subsequently charged.

Lt. Apotheker read the definition of misdemeanor crimes and stated that he notifies the state of any such charges for record in their database. It goes before a clerk magistrate to determine whether arraignment is warranted.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

### **HRC Awards Committee:**

Marianne congratulated Judy and the committee for the lovely 25<sup>th</sup> annual Human Rights Awards event held Dec. 3 at the Newton Senior Center. It was the most heavily attended award event we've had, due in great part to the tremendous outpouring of support for our adult recipient Audrey Cooper. All members were delighted with the event and expressed admiration of the wonderful student recipients: Jackie Assar and Camilla Jackson from NNHS and Ben Chesler and Rose Race from NSHS. Brenda and Muriel were praised for the refreshments. Brenda was thanked for personally outreaching to the reporter who attended the event and then wrote the nice article in today's Newton TAB.

### **Fair Housing:**

Sheila thanked the HRC for providing their views to the Analysis for Impediments to Fair Housing. The Fair Housing Committee is moving forward with planning winter and spring programs, which will include trainings for realtors, a public education/media campaign and pursuit of the role and process for an architectural access consultant for the city. Sheila stated that she would like to invite the Latino representative from the Newton Public Schools to address the HRC. She noted that there are 1200 Latino students in Newton and even the schools' process of using computers has an impact on them. It would be helpful for the HRC to have a better understanding of what this population faces within our community. It was suggested we might invite the representative to our February meeting.

### **Program Committee:**

Brenda reported that she has continued to be in touch with Kristen McNeally, who is responsible for assisting with programs relating to "Traces of the Trade". The Foundation for Racial, Ethnic and Religious Harmony and the Newton History Museum/Jackson Homestead are interested and willing to co-sponsor our three-part series. Viviana has spoken with David Pettee and Katrina Brown.

Susan met with Linda Plaut about using the Newton Cultural Center at 225 Nevada Street which has ample parking and a lovely auditorium. Marianne suggested local colleges such as Mt. Ida College and Boston College Law School for possible venues, but rental issues would need to be investigated.

### **Education Committee:**

Sona reported that the HRC now has four representatives from the two high schools and thanked Bev for her help. Viviana said the students from NSHS are interested in helping with our spring programs.

### **Communications:**

Susan noted that she needs to step down from the Communications Committee and asked other members to become involved.

**Membership:** No report

### **MAHRC:**

Peter stated that there were no meetings held in October or November but that there will be a meeting on Friday, December 11.

**Clergy Association:** No report

## **Other Business & Announcements**

Marianne reported that Tony Bibbo indicated that the annual **Martin Luther King, Jr. event** for January 18, 2010 is slated to take place at Our Lady Church. Bev said she will call him to discuss and get information.

Marianne reported that she met with Claire Kashuck, the volunteer coordinator at the **Newton Community Service Center** (NCSC) and they are planning to host a citywide event that honors diversity within the city. It will include arts, music, food and more. They want to have the event at NCSC and involve many groups in Newton. Marianne said that they are at the baseline planning stage. Viviana suggested having games that kids can play because that would interest and involve them in participation. Muriel suggested that the use of dances of different ethnic origin can be very educational and entertaining, especially when they are announced and talked through.

Marianne brought up the growing issue of **bullying and cyber-bullying**. HRC has considered doing a program on this for quite some time. Right now members feel like The Newton Partnership (formerly called the Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant) is working on this fairly extensively.

Bev provided an update on the **Restorative Justice (RJ) committee of the Youth Commission**. Rich Catrambone presented the program before our HRC June meeting and asked for our involvement. He has asked the Youth Commission to sponsor the program within the city and hence they've formed a RJ Committee to do so. We have to explore what kind of human resources and funding is needed and how we might find it. The committee met in November and Bev noted that she and Viviana attended, also representing the HRC.

Peter stated that he attended the **Setti Warren Summit on December 6** and he was in the public safety group. He said Rich Catrambone was also in attendance and brought up restorative justice. He noted that since there is no funding, creative resources for implementation were discussed. Other issues such as sidewalk snow removal were also discussed. There were 6 break-out groups and all had sets of charts, then made three final recommendations per task force to the Mayor-elect. Other groups included education, environment, housing, public safety and two others.

**Reverend Porter** stated that he has been to Israel five times and this last recent visit was his first staying with a Palestinian family on the West Bank. He provided a handout with information about peace, handicraft and educational groups that can be contacted for tours, programs and home stays in Palestine on the West Bank. He was sponsored by Siraj Center for Holy Land Studies. He spoke of some of his experiences, one of which was the olive tree orchards, and how when fences are imposed the olive trees die. The olive trees are incredibly important to the Palestinians. He advocated for more people to employ diplomacy.

**The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 PM.**

**NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, January 13, 2010 and will take place in Room 222.**

Respectfully submitted, Beverly Droz, HRC staff director, and Suzy Rosenthal, HRC Advisory Council